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SALT TALKS IN ABEYANCE

ANNCR: THE STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION TALKS (SALT) BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION, WHICH HAVE BEEN PROCEEDING SLOWLY AT GENEVA, ARE ONCE AGAIN ADJOURNED TO PERMIT THE DELEGATION HEADS TO RETURN TO THEIR CAPITALS FOR CONSULTATION. VOA NEWS ANALYST JOHN ALBERT LOOKS AT THE TECHNICAL AND POLITICAL CLIMATE SURROUNDING THESE IMPORTANT TALKS:

VOICE: THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS TO JUNE SECOND HAS INCREASED ALREADY EXISTING CONCERN THAT AGREEMENT, ONCE THOUGHT POSSIBLE BY THE END OF 1975, MAY BE FURTHER DELAYED. IN RECENT DAYS, BOTH PRESIDENT FORD AND SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER HAVE RE-EMPHASIZED THE AMERICAN DESIRE TO PURSUE THESE NEGOTIATIONS WITH ALL POSSIBLE VIGOR. THEY REMAIN CONVINCED THAT AN EQUITABLE SALT AGREEMENT IS NOT ONLY DESIRABLE, BUT POSSIBLE. AND SECRETARY KISSINGER HAS SAID HE WOULD NOT PRECLUDE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS THIS YEAR. BUT BOTH MEN HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES REMAIN IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS. AND THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT A RECENT SOVIET REPLY TO AMERICAN PROPOSALS HAS YET REMOVED THOSE DIFFERETCES. IT CAN BE EXPECTED THAT AN AMERICAN REPLY WILL BE DECIDED UPON IN DUE COURSE, AFTER CONSULTATION WITH DELEGATION LEADER AMBASSADOR ALEXIS JOHNSON.

THE DIFFERENCES INCLUDE PROBLEMS OF VERIFICATION AFFECTING THE NEW COMPLEX WEAPONS SYSTEMS, PARTICULARLY THE NEWER MISSILES WITH MULTIPLE WARHEADS. BUT IT HAS BEEN STATED PUBLICLY THAT THE MAJOR OUTSTANDING ISSUE IS THE QUESTION OF THE SOVIET LONG-RANGE BOMBER, THE SO-CALLED " BACKFIRE," AND THE AMERICAN "CRUISE MISSILE." VARIOUS PROPOSALS HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED WHICH

WOULD EITHER ACCOMODATE ALL OR PART OF THESE NEW WEAPONS SYSTEMS UNDER THE OVERALL CEILING FOR STRATEGIC WEAPONS OR WHICH WOULD LOWER THAT CEILING AND KEEP A CERTAIN NUMBER OF THESE WEAPONS OUTSIDE THESE RESTRICTIONS. THE DETAILS OF PROPOSALS AND COUNTER PROPOSALS HAVE NOT BEEN MADE KNOWN, BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT THE MAJOR DIFFICULTY INVOLVES THE DIFFERENT EVALUATION THAT THE TWO SIDES PUT ON THESE WEAPONS, AS FAR AS THEIR CHARACTERISTICS AND INFLUENCE ON THE MILITARY BALANCE ARE CONCERNED.

IT CAN HARDLY BE DENIED THAT THE PACE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS HAS BEEN MUCH SLOWER THAN WAS ORIGINALLY ENVISAGED. IN FACT, PRESIDENT FORD, WHO INDICATED LAST JANUARY THE NEED FOR AMERICAN MOVES, IF PROGRESS IS MUCH DELAYED, HAS NOW SUGGESTED TO CONGRESS AN ADDITIONAL WEAPONS PROGRAM OF OVER THREE HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS. THE FUNDS WOULD BE USED TO CONTINUE PRODUCTION OF MINUTEMAN MISSILES AND TO BEGIN PRODUCING A POWERFUL NEW WARHEAD FOR THEM. AS ON MANY PREVIOUS OCCASIONS, THE ADMINISTRATION HAS INDICATED THAT SUFFICIENT PROGRESS IN THE SALT NEGOTIATIONS WOULD MAKE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS MOVE UNNECESSARY.

HOWEVER, IT IS CLEAR THAT BOTH INTERNATIONAL EVENTS AND THE FACT THAT AMERICA IS GOING THROUGH AN ELECTION YEAR HAVE HAD SOME EFFECT ON THE PACE OF THE SALT TALKS. DESPITE A CERTAIN DETERIORIATION IN U.S.- SOVIET RELATIONS, CAUSED MAINLY BY SOVIET ADVENTURISM IN ANGOLA, SECRETARY KISSINGER HAS STRESSED HIS HOPE THAT FUNDAMENTAL NEGOTIATIONS SUCH AS SALT WOULD NOT BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED. THE SECRETARY ALSO HAS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN, WITH CANDIDATES MAKING CHARGES AND COUNTER CHARGES OVER FOREIGN POLICY, MAY INHIBIT AMERICAN

INITIATIVES AND, AT THE SAME TIME, MAKE OTHER NATIONS HESITATE TO MOVE IN MAJOR NEGOTIATIONS. BUT THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY REMAIN CONVINCED THAT BASIC AND WELL- ESTABLISHED POLICIES, SUCH AS SALT, MUST BE PURSUED WITH ENERGY AND CONVICTION EVEN DURING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. OBVIOUSLY, UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT MAY REQUIRE GREAT CARE FOR THE FORD ADMINISTRATION TO MOVE IN A WAY WHICH HAS MAXIMUM SUPPORT FROM CONGRESS. HOWEVER, THE ADMINISTRATION FEELS THAT BECAUSE OF THE DANGER THAT WOULD BE POSED BY A RENEWED NUCLEAR ARMS COMPETITION OR A NUCLEAR CONFRONTATION, IT CANNOT NEGLECT THE SALT NEGOTIATIONS. WHETHER AN AGREEMENT CAN BE COMPLETED THIS YEAR AND BE SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS BEFORE THE ELECTION-CONSIDERING THE TIME NEEDED TO TRANSFORM A BASIC UNDERSTANDING INTO FIRM TREATY TERMS-- IS ANOTHER QUESTION.

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